

10. IS THE CORRECT NAME OF THE MANGROVE WHISTLER, *PACHYCEPHALA CINEREA* (BLYTH) OR *PACHYCEPHALA GRISOLA* (BLYTH)?

Blyth (1842, *J. Asiat. Soc. Beng.* **11**: 799) was confused over the identity of a female specimen supposed to be an example of *Tephrodornis superciliosus* Swainson v. *Lanius keroula* Hardwicke and Gray. It differed considerably from the male. Both specimens were collected together out of a small party (from the neighbourhood of Calcutta). At a later date he shot another female of *T. superciliosus* and found that the male and female were alike. The controversial female specimen could therefore be isolated specifically and it appears that he could not place it with any other species. The description laid down by him was as follows :-

“ . . . no white whatever on the tail, which is besides shorter and less rounded and the superciliary streak and dark colour of the ear-coverts are also wanting.” He further pointed out “. . . the diversity in the tail is so remarkable that I imagine few would incline to regard them specifically the same.” This expression of doubt was cleared by him when a year later (*J. Asiat. Soc. Beng.* **12**: 180) he remarked, “The supposed variety of *Tephrodornis superciliosus*, having no whitish line over the eye, nor white on the exterior tail feathers may be designated *T. grisola*”. In the year 1847, Blyth described *Muscitrea cinerea* (*J. Asiat. Soc. Beng.* **16**: 122) from Arakan, Burma. It was later found that *Muscitrea cinerea* was the same as *Tephrodornis grisola*. The species name *grisola* has been subsequently used by Jerdon (1862, BIRDS OF INDIA, **1**: 411) Gadow (1883, CAT. BIRDS BRITISH MUS. **8**: 220), Oates (1890, FAUNA BRITISH INDIA, Birds, **2**: 31), Oberholser (1912, *Smithson. misc. Collns.* **60**: 11), Stresemann (1913, *Novit. Zool.* **20**: 355), Baker (1924, 1930, FAUNA BRITISH INDIA, Birds, **2**: 484; **7**: 190), Robinson (1927, THE BIRDS OF MALAY PENINSULA **1**: 189) Delacour & Jabouille (1931, LES OISEAUX DE L’ INDOCHINE FRANCAISE p. 208), Kuroda (1933, THE BIRDS OF THE ISLANDS OF JAVA **1**: 151), Junge (1936, *Temminckia* **1**: 59), Riley (1938, *Bull. U.S. nat. Mus.* **172**: 484-485), Chasen (1939, THE BIRDS OF MALAY PENINSULA **4**: 231), Smythies (1940, THE BIRDS OF BURMA, p. 164). From the literature as far as available to me I find that since 1940, the species name *cinerea* has been used by De Schau-
eusee (1940, *Proc. Acas nat. Sci. Phil.* **91**: 409), Delacour (1947 BIRDS OF MALAYASIA, p. 298), Glenister (1951, THE BIRDS OF MALAY PENINSULA, SINGAPORE AND PENANG, p. 227), Smythies (1953, THE BIRDS OF BURMA, p. 159), Ripley (1961 A SYNOPSIS OF THE BIRDS OF INDIA AND PAKISTAN, p. 440), Mayr (1967, CHECK-LIST OF THE BIRDS OF THE WORLD **12**: 8), Ali & Ripley (1968, HANDBOOK OF THE BIRDS OF INDIA AND PAKISTAN **1**: xlvi) and others. Ripley, Mayr, and a few others explained that *Tephrodornis grisola* was unidentifiable, hence the later name *cinerea* should be used.

The genus *Muscitrea* has since been synonymised with *Pachycephala* Vigors (1825, *Trans. Linn. Soc. Lond.* **14**: 444). An examination of the type specimen of Blyth's *Tephrodornis grisola* (♀, Botanical Garden, Sibpur, near Calcutta), present in the Zoological Survey of India, however, leaves one without any doubt as to its correct identity—that it is the same bird currently known as *Pachycephala cinerea* (Blyth). No doubt Blyth's (*J. Asiat. Soc. Beng.* **12**: 180) description of *Tephrodornis grisola* is vague and inadequate, but the species can be identified by referring to the type specimen. Since the species name *grisola* is older than *cinerea* and is identifiable, it should be resurrected. Such an action will not violate Article 23b of the code.

ZOOLOGICAL SURVEY OF INDIA,

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CALCUTTA-13.

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11. SLIGHT REACTION FROM BITES OF THE REAR-FANGED SNAKES *BOIGA CEYLONENSIS* (GUNTHER) AND *DRYOPHIS NASUTUS* (LACÉPÈDE)

While handling a Cat Snake (*Boiga ceylonensis*, 750 mm.) which I had collected from Khandala, it bit and held the middle of my left middle finger, the snake's whole mouth closed over the finger. There was slight bleeding and after a few minutes the bitten area was swollen to the degree of a moderate bee sting, accompanied by itching. These symptoms persisted for about half an hour, the swelling gradually disappeared after about two hours.

In April, while handling a Green Whip Snake (*Dryophis nasutus*, 680 mm.) it made a sudden jab at my face (which is a common habit of this species) and made a quick bite on the tip of my nose. Immediately blood started dripping and this continued for an unusually long time (18 minutes). The nose tip is a very sensitive area and I experienced the itchiness mentioned above, but only slightly noticeable swelling.

Species of *Boiga* and *Dryophis* in India grow to over six feet in length, but the only danger from their bites would be to those rare individuals "hyper-sensitive" to the venom (similar to the more commonly occurring allergy to bee and wasp venoms). The only rearfanged snake considered dangerous to man occurs in Africa, the Boomslang (*Dispholidus typus*).

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